To the student of the Middle Ages, parish churches are of unparalleled value, as there are few buildings that offer such substantial insight into the material culture of both religious belief and secular status and identity in the late Middle Ages. Although local churches were never as physically imposing or aesthetically impressive as cathedrals and abbeys, their ubiquity, prominence, and accessibility ensured that they played a crucial role in the lives of all strata of society. They served as the site and space of day-to-day religious activity, a focal point for the display of secular wealth and authority, the arena in which the major milestones of life were marked, and a hub for formal and informal contact with members of the community. The material manifestation of these activities was already significant in the early medieval period, but it was further heightened in the late medieval economic and sociocultural climate. After the final codification of the parochial system in the twelfth century Pounds , 3; Tatton-Brown , , patrons focused less on constructing new churches, and more on rebuilding and elaborating those that already existed. Despite considerable evidence for an economic downturn across the whole of England in the fifteenth century, investment in the church was nevertheless so widespread that there are only a very few churches in England which remain wholly untouched by late medieval building programmes Morris , ; Postan , In the thirteenth century, the short apsidal chancels of the twelfth century were frequently rebuilt longer, larger, and with squared-off ends, most likely to accommodate liturgical changes to the site of the altar and the position of the priest when celebrating mass Davidson , Aisles were often added in the later Middle Ages as well, if the church had not already acquired them in the building boom of the twelfth century Brown , The addition of aisles, and their occasional subsequent demolition, was long thought of as a reflection of expanding and declining population and congregation size. Indeed, in some cases, as at Wharram Percy North Yorkshire , the addition and loss of aisles does seem to trace the late medieval prosperity and demographic trajectory of the settlement Beresford and Hurst A new aisle could impact not only the layout of the church, but the ways in which liturgical practice and processions moved through it. By adding an aisle, a patron laid claim to a space within the church, and could emphasize his status and significance by determining behaviour within that space Graves , Piecemeal remodeling continued and intensified throughout the late medieval period, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw numerous additions, enlargements, and rebuildings of chantry chapels, towers, aisles, and porches. Compared to other fittings and fabric, church windows are mentioned relatively infrequently as bequests in medieval wills Ford , , but the archaeological evidence is clear that fenestration programs were by far the most common late medieval adaptation. Windows were a particularly attractive investment, and in urban areas they seem to have been a favourite of the wealthy mercantile classes, as has been shown in the churches of late medieval York and Norwich Barnett , 76; Graves , Windows were appealing because they were a relatively quick means of updating the church to the latest architectural style, and the stained glass within them provided an opportunity to conspicuously express patronal ambitions and commemorate the dead, while simultaneously beautifying the church, and even altering the internal ambience of the building through light and colour Giles , ; Barnwell , 81; Platt , As a result of the continuous addition, subtraction, and modification of subsequent generations, medieval parish churches and chapels are particularly complex palimpsests of construction, and church archaeology has contributed significantly to our understanding of how and why churches were transformed over time. The use of systematic, empirical recording techniques and stratigraphic analyses of fabric has elucidated minute details of the relationships between building phases, revealing that the structural development of the parish church was even more complex than purely stylistic architectural assessments had suggested Rodwell , 65, One of its most enduring contributions has been the consideration of the parish church not as an isolated building, but as an integral part of the surrounding physical, social, and built environment. Furthermore, archaeologists have recently embraced an

interdisciplinary, explicitly theoretical approach to the study of parish churches, that sees architectural and decorative developments not as lifeless processes, but as the outcome of active, meaningful choices made by knowledgeable agents. This approach has encouraged exploration of a number of pertinent issues which were bound up in the material culture and use of the medieval church, including examinations of space, landscape, belief, authority, memory, perception, and identity. Recent research in church archaeology has thus not only transformed our understanding of the late medieval local church, but of late medieval society as a whole. The chronology of parochial formation has long been of interest to early medieval church archaeologists, but late medieval archaeology has now demonstrated that the parish network was by no means static after the twelfth century. Dependent chapels were frequently founded well into the later Middle Ages, further subdividing the parochial system, and marking sites of population growth, urban and suburban expansion, and new settlements colonizing marginal, assarted, or reclaimed land Owen , Many of these dependent chapels eventually acquired the rights of burial and baptism, and some even became fully independent parish churches, thus complicating and revising the hierarchical and financial relationships between churches, settlements, and estates. Gaining independence and the right to bury and commemorate often drew patronage and expenditure to the chapel, and away from the traditional hub of the parish church Dymond , Other studies of churches and the landscape have characterized churches as a physical and conceptual embodiment of secular authority, and argued that they were key material components of elite identity. The construction and location of churches in medieval settlements has been seen as indicative of feudal power, as building or rebuilding a church required wealth, human and technological resources, and control over land and materials. In this view, the permanence of the church reinforced and stabilized feudal relationships of dominance, and articulated lordly and elite authority over the lower classes Saunders , In a study of rural Lincolnshire, it has been shown that not only were manors and churches in close physical association, but at times were situated on the periphery of the settlement, apparently deliberately creating an elite enclave separate from the communal space of the village McDonagh , In these cases, churches were constructed and decorated not only to reflect the status and wealth of lords and patrons, but also to provide a locale in which these attributes could be negotiated and maintained. However, others have argued that in many cases late medieval churches were not a monolithic apparatus of the elite, but were instead heavily influenced by the wider parish community Dyer , In the late medieval parish churches of Coventry, which profited exceptionally from the late medieval wool trade, guild and fraternity chapels occupied nearly every space in the church apart from the chancel Platt , In a situation such as this, high levels of competition for space and prominence amongst patrons necessitated continual investment to maintain a place in the social hierarchy. The inherent accessibility and widening range of patrons in the late medieval parish church might mean that, through the use of material culture and the occupation of religious space, the established social order could be challenged or even overturned. Form, space, and art A number of studies have also considered the architectural form, interior character, and ornament of the late medieval parish church. These studies have drawn on traditional approaches from art history and buildings archaeology, but also have brought to bear sociological theories concerning perceptions and use of space, visuality, memory, and even sound and movement. An extremely common architectural adaptation of the late medieval church, yet one of the least studied by archaeologists, is the chantry chapel Barnett , ; Roffey , 7. These structures were built by a patron, usually attached to the chancel or aisles of the church, in order to provide a space for masses to be said for the souls of the patron and family in perpetuity. They thus provided tangible spiritual benefits, but could serve familial, political, professional, and social motivations as well. Chantry chapels also created an area of semi-private worship for an elite family, effectively making a private claim over the public space of the church. The chapel physically and spatially distinguished the family from the remainder of the parish community, and often situated them in a privileged location, beyond the rood screen which divided nave from chancel, and closer to the high altar, the focal point of holiness in the church. However, it has also been argued that chantry chapels were not solely individualistic private monuments, but also served the interests of the parish at large. In addition, the divine services said in the chantry, its priest and altar, and its funerary monuments would all have been an integral visual and aural part of the standard celebration of mass. In this way, the chantry patrons would not have been perceived as isolated from the parish

community, but as local exemplars of piety, who played an important, familiar, and appreciated role in the performance of the mass Roffey , In recent years, archaeologists have also begun to pay more scholarly attention to the art of the church, including wall paintings, sculpture, and stained glass. These features have been considered not only in terms of style, iconography, and technical execution, but according to the social roles they held. Several studies have shown that art in the church was used to communicate multiple messages to a variety of audiences, such as in the chapel at Haddon Hall Derbyshire. But those in the nave catered to the biblical knowledge of the common parishioner, with uncomplicated images of the popular saints Christopher and George. At the same time, the scheme as a whole asserted the social standing and lineage of the Vernon family to both common and elite outside audiences Naydenova , The patrons of the paintings were then ostentatiously displaying possession of that knowledge in the space of the church that was under lay control Giles , This may suggest a lay challenge to the authority of the clergy, and also indicates the tension that could exist between conceptions of institutional and popular piety Giles , 50; Graves , These studies have highlighted that further research is needed to refine our understanding of medieval perceptions of secular and sacred space and behaviour, and the boundaries that lay between them. Recent work has already shown that these concepts, and their material manifestations, often became particularly muddled within the bounds of the parish church Graves , ; Woodcock , Future research into the creation, use, and meaning of social space within church buildings and ecclesiastical landscapes will undoubtedly benefit from rapidly advancing technologies of spatial analysis, particularly computer-aided mapping, modeling, and 3-D visualization. Geographical Information Systems GIS mapping facilitates the examination and visualization of the landscape context of churches, and of their physical relationships to key political, topographical, and settlement characteristics or boundaries e. McClain ; Stocker and Everson It also enables the systematic analysis of changes in patterns over space and time on a large scale, in a way that is time- consuming if not impossible to do by hand. Furthermore, 3-D architectural reconstruction programs can be used to model the form, space, decoration, and even the aural and visual experience of the medieval church and liturgy, and to demonstrate how that experience could change over time depending on formal and spatial variables e. Conclusion The archaeological study of the late medieval church is a relatively recent development, and it has not been nearly as prominent as early medieval church archaeology, with its well-known excavations of Anglo-Saxon churches. But the above discussion undoubtedly demonstrates how much can be accomplished even without access to the below-ground archaeology. Indeed, the lack of excavation opportunities on late medieval sites is perhaps in some measure responsible for the resultant innovations in the theory and method of church archaeology, which can usefully inform future study in churches of all periods. The studies discussed all provide a firm foundation on which to build new research directions in church archaeology. They all embrace interdisciplinarity with history, art history, geography, and sociology, and they offer interpretations which provide insight into the unique melding of the religious and the secular that characterized the medieval parish church. Given the staggering number of surviving parish churches in England, the amount of archaeological work carried out on them has been relatively small, and the study of the late medieval church, particularly, is still often ceded to historians and art historians. This short discussion has hopefully demonstrated not only what great strides have been made in the archaeology of the late medieval church, but also how much more there is still for future scholars to do. Photo by Chris Brown, used with permission of www. It is probable that the man performing the acts of mercy is the patron himself. Rood screen, St Helen, Ranworth, Norfolk, fifteenth century. Ranworth has retained its medieval chancel screen, although without the surmounting cross, and it gives some impression of how the east end of the church would be blocked from view from the nave. The door for the former rood loft is still visible high on the northeast wall. Photo by John Salmon Fig. The church and castle are situated in close proximity, on slightly higher ground off the main street of the village. The church used to lie within the castle walls, and it is likely that the church and castle were founded together in the twelfth century. Photo by author Fig. The Martyrdom of St. This painting occupies the easternmost bay of the north wall of the nave, marking a feast day of November 20th Photo by T. Marshall, used with permission of www. The model emphasizes the coexistence of stylistic phases, and the recreation of light, texture, and interior decoration to model the sensory experience of the medieval parish church. The Form and

Fabric of Belief: Continuity and Change, Edward Arnold London: The Medieval Chantry Chapel:

Fabric of Belief: Continuity and Change, Edward Arnold London: The Medieval Chantry Chapel:

Chapter 2 : Professor Robert Swanson - Department of History - University of Birmingham

Church and Society in Late Medieval England has 2 ratings and 0 reviews. The two centuries from the Black Death to the Reformation witnessed population c.

The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome, review no. Hindsight does, however, have its advantages, and one of them is that it focuses attention on areas of the past which might otherwise be relatively neglected. It seems highly unlikely, for example, that the English Church of the late 15th and early 16th centuries would have attracted the attention of so many scholars were it not for our need to explain one of the most dramatic moments in English history, the English Reformation. The book opens with a chapter on the Hunne Affair. This reinterpretation will not convince all readers, but it certainly challenges us to rethink our opinions of the familiar, and in doing so very much sets the tone for the volume. The second portion focuses on the late 15th and early 16th centuries, uncovering the major causes of tension primarily familiar issues such as benefit of clergy and the role of the Papacy between crown and church in the years leading up to the Reformation. Instead, there were intermittent objections to specific royal actions usually relating to small points of jurisdiction , which simply served to make the church appear petty and self-interested. The next pair of chapters examines the personnel of the late medieval church: The first of these highlights the many challenges faced by the medieval bishop, and the contradictions inherent in his office. Late medieval prelates were still trying to live up to an ideal created in apostolic times; their attempts to adhere to standards which were both impossibly high and hopelessly out-dated were doomed to failure. Many of their problems were linked to the existence of the monarchical church: Similarly, Bernard is broadly sympathetic to the plight of the lower clergy who form the subject of chapter four. Like the bishops, they attempted to live up to unrealistic ideals and, like the bishops, many of them failed in their efforts. The numerous problem areas amongst them celibacy, learning and preaching, pluralism and non-residence, and involvement in secular affairs are examined in turn. The cathedral clergy were, Bernard suggests, particularly worldly, and therefore particularly vulnerable to criticism. Out in the parishes, the picture was far more complex: As Bernard himself points out, it is immensely difficult to make valid generalisations about such a large number of individuals. Chapters five and six examine an even larger group: There is, Bernard suggests, substantial evidence for popular devotion, but by the evidence for popular understanding he is somewhat less convinced: Both flourished in the later Middle Ages, and serve as important evidence of the strength of popular devotion. But here too was vulnerability, for it was all too easy to point out that there were too few priests to celebrate as many masses for the dead as were requested, or to question the motives of those who went on pilgrimage, or to suggest that much-worshipped relics were not what they were purported to be. Disputes between church and laity were not infrequent, with the main causes of such disputes relating to finance and jurisdiction: Townsfolk and cathedral chapters were often at odds, and there was probably some popular resentment at the considerable wealth of the church. For Bernard, however, none of this suggests that there was widespread anti-clericalism: Critics typically directed their anger not at the church as a whole, but at individuals who were perceived to have failed to live up to the standards of the church. The picture is not entirely bleak: Certainly, very few were guilty of the lurid crimes of which the reformers accused them. Yet there were also many problems, and many religious were somewhat preoccupied with worldly affairs: Like many of his predecessors in this field, Bernard sees the monasteries as one of the greatest weaknesses of the late medieval church. Bernard traces the English experience of heresy from the end of the 14th century to the beginning of the 16th, and argues that the evidence for its existence is somewhat limited. Some historians have assumed that the surviving records of heresy reflect only the tip of the iceberg, with Lollardy being widespread by the early 16th century. Here, however, we are encouraged to think again about the nature of anti-heresy campaigns: The church which emerges from this study is a vibrant and dynamic institution, and the Reformation does not appear to have been in the least bit inevitable. In many respects, this version of the late medieval church is not so different from that presented by Duffy and his followers. Undergraduates tackling essays on the strengths and weaknesses of the late medieval church should be eternally grateful to

Professor Bernard for providing them with both sides of the argument in a single volume. What the reader will not find in this volume are the roots of the English Reformation. Whilst the English Church had vulnerabilities which the reformers were able to exploit, the existence of these vulnerabilities would not seem to explain why a reform movement came into being in s England. Indeed, some of the vulnerabilities which Bernard identifies in the late medieval church apply equally to religion as a whole. Even more striking are the many similarities between the English church of the early 16th century, and the same institution in the 15th, 14th and even 13th centuries. If the vulnerabilities of the late medieval church were, for the most part, centuries old, then where does that leave our quest for the causes of the English Reformation? Such questions are clearly beyond the scope of this particular work, but that they arise at all is an indication of the extent to which Bernard succeeds in making his reader think about the bigger picture. Overall then, this is a deeply engaging and thought-provoking study of a familiar and thorny problem. Once again he has succeeded in doing so; this volume will undoubtedly encourage its readers to rethink their opinion of the late medieval church. Hopefully it will also attract interest beyond the world of Reformation scholars; there is certainly much here to interest the medieval ecclesiastical historian, and indeed the general reader. Back to 1 November

Chapter 3 : MedievalEuropeOnline: Chapter Twelve

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The relationship of Christians and Christian institutions to forms of the political order has shown an extraordinary diversity throughout church history. There have been, for example, theocratically founded monarchies, democracies, and communist communities. In various periods, however, political revolution, based A brief treatment of church and state follows. For full treatment, see Christianity: Before the advent of Christianity, separate religious and political orders were not clearly defined in most civilizations. People worshipped the gods of the particular state in which they lived, religion in such cases being but a department of the state. The Christian concept of the secular and the spiritual is founded on the words of Jesus: Two distinct, but not altogether separate, areas of human life and activity had to be distinguished; hence, a theory of two powers came to form the basis of Christian thought and teaching from earliest times. During the 1st century ad the Apostles , living under a pagan empire, taught respect for and obedience to the governing powers so long as such obedience did not violate the higher, or divine, law, which superseded political jurisdiction. Among the Church Fathers , who lived in a period when Christianity had become the religion of the empire, the emphasis on the primacy of the spiritual was even stronger. They insisted upon the independence of the church and the right of the church to judge the actions of the secular ruler. With the decline of the Roman Empire in the West, civil authority fell into the hands of the only educated class that remainedâ€"the churchmen. The church, which formed the only organized institution, became the seat of temporal as well as spiritual power. In the East the civil authorities, centred in Constantinople, dominated the ecclesiastical throughout the Byzantine period. In , under Charlemagne , the empire was restored in the West, and by the 10th century many secular rulers held power throughout Europe. A period of political manipulation of the church hierarchy and a general decline in clerical zeal and piety brought vigorous action from a line of reforming popes, the most famous of whom was Gregory VII. The following centuries were marked by a dramatic struggle of emperors and kings with the popes. During the 12th and 13th centuries, papal power greatly increased. In the 13th century, however, the greatest scholar of the age, St. Thomas Aquinas , borrowing from Aristotle, aided in raising the dignity of the civil power by declaring the state a perfect society the other perfect society was the church and a necessary good. The medieval struggle between secular and religious power came to a climax in the 14th century with the rise of nationalism and the increased prominence of lawyers, both royalist and canon. Numerous theorists contributed to the atmosphere of controversy, and the papacy finally met with disaster, first in the removal of the popes to Avignon under French influence and second with the Great Schism attendant upon an effort to bring the popes back to Rome. Church discipline was relaxed, and church prestige fell in all parts of Europe. The immediate effect of the Reformation was to diminish the power of the church even further. Christianity in its fractured condition could offer no effective opposition to strong rulers, who now claimed divine right for their positions as head of church and state. Many Lutheran churches became, in effect, arms of the state. In the 17th century there were few who believed that diversity of religious belief and a church unconnected with the civil power were possible in a unified state. Common religious standards were looked upon as a principal support of the political order. When the notions of diversity of belief and toleration of dissent did start to grow, they were not generally seen to conflict with the concept of a state church. The Puritans , for example, who fled religious persecution in England in the 17th century, enforced rigid conformity to church ideas among settlers in the American colonies. The concept of secular government as expressed in the First Amendment to the U. Constitution reflected both the influence of the French Enlightenment on colonial intellectuals and the special interests of the established churches in preserving their separate and distinct identities. The Baptists , notably, held the separation of church and state powers as a principle of their creed. The great wave of migration to the United States by Roman Catholics in the s prompted a reassertion of the principle of secular government by

state legislatures fearing allocation of government funds to parochial educational facilities. The 20th century saw the First and Fourteenth amendments to the Constitution applied with considerable strictness by the courts in the field of education. Late in the century, conservative Christian groups in the United States generated considerable controversy by seeking textbook censorship, reversal of court prohibition of school prayer, and requirements that certain Biblical doctrines be taught in contradistinction to scientific theories. Learn More in these related Britannica articles:

Chapter 4 : Church and Society in Late Medieval England: R. N. Swanson: calendrierdelascience.com: Boo

Church and society in late medieval England (review) Philippa C. Maddern Parergon, Volume 13, Number 2, January , pp. (Review) Published by Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Alain Chartier defended his poem Belle Dame sans merci by saying it was fiction. The women responded that fictions could still be libellous. Thefinalfemale figure considered, Clotilde de Surville, may or may not have existed, and die conclusion seems to be that asfictionshave reality, so she has significance, wheUier she is a literary hoax or not. This book is interesting and the argument is judicious and well supported by the evidence. If it has a fault, it is diat it is written in a certain type of late twentieth-century academic language which occasionally has the reader begging for plain English. Swanson begins his preface by deconstructing his own title. Christendom was usually thought to comprise society. His task therefore becomes to describe this ambivalent culture, and to analyse the relationships between strictly ecclesiastical institutional structures and those of the wider Christian world. Reviews Describe them he does. His plan is imaginatively detailed, and the scale ofresearchimpressive. The book teems with information from national, regional, local, and individual perspectives, and encompasses almost the whole social hierarchy. Readers will find illuminating accounts of the structure and bureaucracy of the English Church, its legal rights and responsibilities, and its economic role as consumer, entrepreneur, and producer. O n a more individual level, Swanson uncovers fascinating material on, for example, career prospects of late-medieval ordinands, cases in local church courts, and even the threatened strike action of an underpaid curate. In sum, the book is a wonderful compendium of late-medieval English ecclesiology and piety. The preface aside, historiographical issues are rarely raised in this work. One of its strengths is its consistent refusal to treat the medieval English Church as primarily a spiritual institution, whose economic identity was homogeneous and hardly worth special mention. These included employing labour, providing a market for high-quality goods and services, and allowing profitable opportunities for small-scale lay capitalists to lease property and farm churchtithes. Viewed in this light, earlier research on the economic importance of the Church begins to look narrow. Its other aspects render him less comfortable. A n unremittingly circumspect approach to the history of mentalites tends to leave his section on piety stranded at the point of inconclusive generality. Evidence for individual and collective beliefs is admittedly difficult. Yet, surely more could have been made of the many classes of material which begin to survive in reasonable quantity from just this period:

Chapter 5 : Church and state in medieval Europe - Wikipedia

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Chapter 6 : Society in the Middle Ages | Middle Ages

Swanson (University of Birmingham), author of several articles based on archival research especially from York, has written an ambitious study of the late medieval church in England with an emphasis on the "social" element rather than the "ecclesiastical.".

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Alain Chartier defended his poem Belle Dame sans merci by saying it was fiction. The women responded that fictions could still be libellous. Thefinalfemale figure considered, Clotilde de Surville, may or may not have existed, and die conclusion seems to be that asfictionshave reality, so she has significance, wheUier she is a literary hoax or not. This book is interesting and the argument is judicious and well supported by the evidence. If it has a fault, it is diat it is written in a certain type of late twentieth-century academic language which occasionally has the reader begging for plain English. Swanson begins his preface by deconstructing his own title. Christendom was usually thought to comprise society. His task therefore becomes to describe this ambivalent culture, and to analyse the relationships between strictly ecclesiastical institutional structures and those of the wider Christian world. Reviews Describe them he does. His plan is imaginatively detailed, and the scale ofresearchimpressive. The book teems with information from national, regional, local, and individual perspectives, and encompasses almost the whole social hierarchy. Readers will find illuminating accounts of the structure and bureaucracy of the English Church, its legal rights and responsibilities, and its economic role as consumer, entrepreneur, and producer. O n a more individual level, Swanson uncovers fascinating material on, for example, career prospects of late-medieval ordinands, cases in local church courts, and even the threatened strike action of an underpaid curate. In sum, the book is a wonderful compendium of late-medieval English ecclesiology and piety. The preface aside, historiographical issues are rarely raised in this work. One of its strengths is its consistent refusal to treat the medieval English Church as primarily a spiritual institution, whose economic identity was homogeneous and hardly worth special mention. These included employing labour, providing a market for high-quality goods and services, and allowing profitable opportunities for small-scale lay capitalists to lease property and farm churchtithes. Viewed in this light, earlier research on the economic importance of the Church begins to look narrow. Its other aspects render him less comfortable. A n unremittingly circumspect approach to the history of mentalites tends to leave his section on piety stranded at the point of inconclusive generality. Evidence for individual and collective beliefs is admittedly difficult. Yet, surely more could have been made of the many classes of material which begin to survive in reasonable quantity from just this period: You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 7 : Medieval English society

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The salient political feature of the initiation of this historical period was the collapse of Western Roman Empire while the medieval period ended with the advent of renaissance which is known to be the beginning of the Modern Era. After the collapse of Roman Empire, the society of The Middle Ages continued to suffer barbarian invasions as they occupied the remains of Roman Empire to start their own kingdoms. Other significant societal changes were the rise of Islamic Empire and the spread of Christianity. While the society was facing great religious movements during The Middle Ages, politically, the society was gradually converting to feudalism. Social Structure of The Middle Ages: An emergence of feudalistic society was eminent in The Middle Ages and the major reason behind this was the necessity of security for the society. The society was divided basically in two classes, the upper classes and the peasants or serfs. The upper class was divided in two segments as the monastic monks and the aristocrats or nobles. The upper class wanted to secure their privilege of maintaining control over their spreading kingdoms. In return, barons used to offer fealty or homage to the king. They not only paid taxes whenever the king demanded, but also, they offered full support to the kings in securing their kingdoms by providing troops to fight for their kings whenever required. The peasants or serfs were those who used to do work or to produce wealth. These serfs used to live in manors controlled by barons or lords. There were independent serfs who used to maintain their own business while offering taxes for their lords. In addition, these independent farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, or bakers were also allowed to own indentured servants. They were given definite portion of land to till and grow food and other necessary things and they had a degree of control over this land as they could pass it on after their death through inheritance. Independent peasants also had some political rights. Peasants accepted the ruling of lords and kings because of their want of security against marauders, looters and barbarians from surrounding lands. The Nobility of The middle Ages Middle Ages society was significantly influenced by the noble class as the nobility had a significant say in all aspects of medieval politics, culture, religion and economics. The members of nobility were those who fight for their barons and kings. They were responsible for the security of the serfs and the clergy. Each member of the nobility was free as a person and he was only responsible for his military duties. The social function of members of nobility was to ensure security of the weak and poor. They were also required to follow the virtues of chivalry, so the clergy created a code of conduct for the members of nobility which they were expected to accept and follow. The clergy or the monks were held high and were respected by serfs and nobles alike. Entertainment and Tournaments during The Middle Ages For serfs and ordinary farmers, most of their day time was spent in working hard and therefore creating wealth; however, there were occasions when the serfs and their lords used to rest, enjoy and entertain themselves. Social activities had their own importance and each of the members of the society was expected to attend these social activities. Local serfs and merchants used to attend fairs, listen to the troubadours and watch and participate in acrobatic games. While the life of a serf was hard and busy, the members of the nobility were not always as busy as they were during the times of barbarian invasions or wars. During the time of peace, these members of nobility had little to do but to manage their portion of land. Often they had little or nothing to work for. This gave rise for the practice of tournaments. Nobles and knights from nearby area and abroad were invited to take part in these competitive tournaments. These tournaments were held for the purpose of entertainment and engagement of members of nobility. The local peasants and serfs were also enjoying those tournaments as it was a way for them to enjoy their free time. Marriages and position of women in society of The Middle Ages One of the important social activities of the society of The Middle Ages was the marriage. Medieval weddings were used to be a reason for celebration for the whole village community. The society used to dictate the jobs that a woman could do. Medieval guilds often barred women from joining them. Women were not allowed to divorce and they could own property only if they were widows. Women were not allowed to inherit property unless they had no brothers and even in such cases, the

inherited property was transferred to their husbands after their marriage. Girls had no say in their marriages as the marriages often were considered as political gestures or advantageous act for the family of the girl. Women of serfs were engaged in hard labor and were required to help their husbands.

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The History Learning Site, 5 Mar All Medieval people â€" be they village peasants or towns people â€" believed that God, Heaven and Hell all existed. From the very earliest of ages, the people were taught that the only way they could get to Heaven was if the Roman Catholic Church let them. Everybody would have been terrified of Hell and the people would have been told of the sheer horrors awaiting for them in Hell in the weekly services they attended. The control the Church had over the people was total. Peasants worked for free on Church land. This proved difficult for peasants as the time they spent working on Church land, could have been better spent working on their own plots of land producing food for their families. Tithes could be paid in either money or in goods produced by the peasant farmers. As peasants had little money, they almost always had to pay in seeds, harvested grain, animals etc. This usually caused a peasant a lot of hardship as seeds, for example, would be needed to feed a family the following year. A failure to pay tithes, so the peasants were told by the Church, would lead to their souls going to Hell after they had died. Now a museum, this building was once a tithe barn serving Maidstone, Kent This is one reason why the Church was so wealthy. People were too scared not to pay tithes despite the difficulties it meant for them. You also had to pay for baptisms if you were not baptised you could not go to Heaven when you died , marriages there were no couples living together in Medieval times as the Church taught that this equaled sin and burials â€" you had to be buried on holy land if your soul was to get to heaven. Whichever way you looked, the Church received money. This saved them a vast sum of money and made it far more wealthy than any king of England at this time. The sheer wealth of the Church is best shown in its buildings: In Medieval England, peasants lived in cruck houses. These were filthy, usually no more than two rooms, with a wooden frame covered with wattle and daub a mixture of mud, straw and manure. No cruck houses exist now â€" most simply collapsed after a while as they were so poorly built. However, there are many Medieval churches around. The way they were built and have lasted for centuries, is an indication of how well they were built and the money the Church had to invest in these building. This church in Rottingdean, East Sussex, is nearly years old. It was made of stone and built to last. Important cities would have cathedrals in them. The most famous cathedrals were at Canterbury and York. After the death of Thomas Becket, Canterbury Cathedral became a center for pilgrimage and the city grew more and more wealthy. So did the Church. They are big by our standards today, but in Medieval England they were bigger than all buildings including royal palaces. Their sheer size meant that people would see them from miles around, and remind them of the huge power of the Catholic Church in Medieval England. This entrance to Amiens Cathedral in France shows just how vast cathedrals were. To work on the building of a cathedral was a great honour. Those who did the skilled work had to belong to a guild. They would have used just the most basic of tools and less than strong scaffolding to do the ceilings. However, if you were killed in an accident while working in a cathedral or a church, you were guaranteed a place in Heaven â€" or so the workers were told.

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R. Swanson, Church and Society in Late Medieval England (Basil Blackwell,) J. Shinners and W. Dohar, Pastors and the Care of Souls in Late Medieval England (University of Notre Dame Press,) J. Shinners, Medieval Popular Religion: a Reader (Broadview Press,).